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Inside...

Additional water

THE city will start getting the additional 30 mgd water from Friday morning from the Karachi water supply project, according to KWSB chief.—Page 2

34 holdups

AT least 34 holdups, including of 25 vehicles, are committed in Karachi. And the mystery of triple murder is solved.— Page 3

Polls boycott

THE annoyed group of PML, led by Punjab Law Minister Basharat Raja, boycotts the elections of 18 special seats of District Council, Rawalpindi.—Page 7

Rabbani's letter

DEPUTY leader of the opposition in the Senate Raza Rabbani has written a letter to National Assembly Speaker for summoning of a joint sitting of parliament.—Page 9

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Yemen kidnapping

US sends FBI team to Yemen for investigating the kidnapping of western tourists and warns Americans against travelling to that country.—Page 14
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N-disarmament

DEADLY adversaries India and Pakistan hold the key to the world's nuclear or non-nuclear future.—Page 21
Also: Partisan politics to rule the US foreign policy

Hockey series

PHF president Akhtar Rasool says that despite India's victory in the Asian Games, Pakistan is fully capable of beating them in the nine-match series. —Page 22
Also: Hopman Cup gets underway tomorrow.

Commission

THE judicial commission adjourns proceedings into match-fixing and betting allegations against certain cricketers until Jan 16. —Page 23

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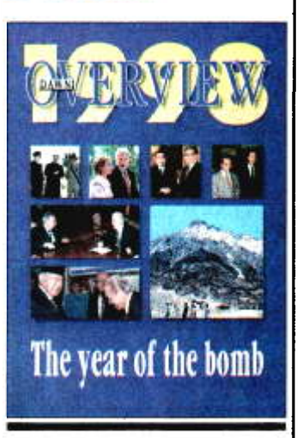

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MTC convict hanged in prison

KARACHI, Dec 31: The first death sentence ordered by a military court this month was carried out on Thursday, prison officials said. Ashraf Chakar, 30, who was condemned to death for killing a police constable, was hanged in Karachi jail.

Presiding officer Lt-Col Razzaq Zia awarded capital punishment to Ashraf Chakar, on the charge of killing a constable Mohammad Siddique of Chakiwara police station on May 13.

His appeal was turned down by the military appellate court a week ago. Ashraf was arrested by the police on June 24 from a nearby locality of Lyari. He had dual nationality of Pakistan and Iran and was alleged to have connections with local drug dealers and criminals.

He was the first convict after the military courts were set up in Sindh under Article 245 of the Constitution on Dec 5. His other accomplices, Usman Ghani, Abdul Jalil, and Nisar were awarded 10 years rigorous imprisonment by the military trial court No. 3. However, the military court pardoned Nisar and rejected the appeal of others.

The military courts have sentenced six people to death so far and imprisoned eight for crimes including murder, kidnapping and gang-rape. The courts began sitting on Dec 5.

Officials said Chakar, sentenced to death on Dec 16, was executed at 6.30am amid tight security around the jail after a military court rejected his appeal three days ago. A heavy police contingent was deployed outside the jail to prevent any untoward incident. No one was allowed to enter the jail premises by the authorities.

His body was handed over to Edhi Welfare Trust for burial as no-one claimed it.

However, according to officials his body was handed over to one of his cousins.

None of the press people were allowed to witness the hanging, however they were informed about it later. The condemned man's uncles and cousins met him last night and again in the early morning before the execution. — AFP/APP/PPI

5 get death penalty for kidnapping

KARACHI, Dec 31: Special judge anti-terrorism court (ATC), Karachi, Mr Hakim Ali Abbasi, on Thursday awarded death sentence to five people involved in kidnapping for ransom, and fine of Rs50,000 each. In default of payment the accused would have to under-go one more year's rigorous imprisonment.

The punishment was announced by the court after it was proved that Mohammad Alam, Meraj, Shahid Alam, Mohammad Mumtaz, and Mohammad Noshad were guilty of kidnapping a teenage boy, Adnan Alias Muna, from Orangi Extension area.

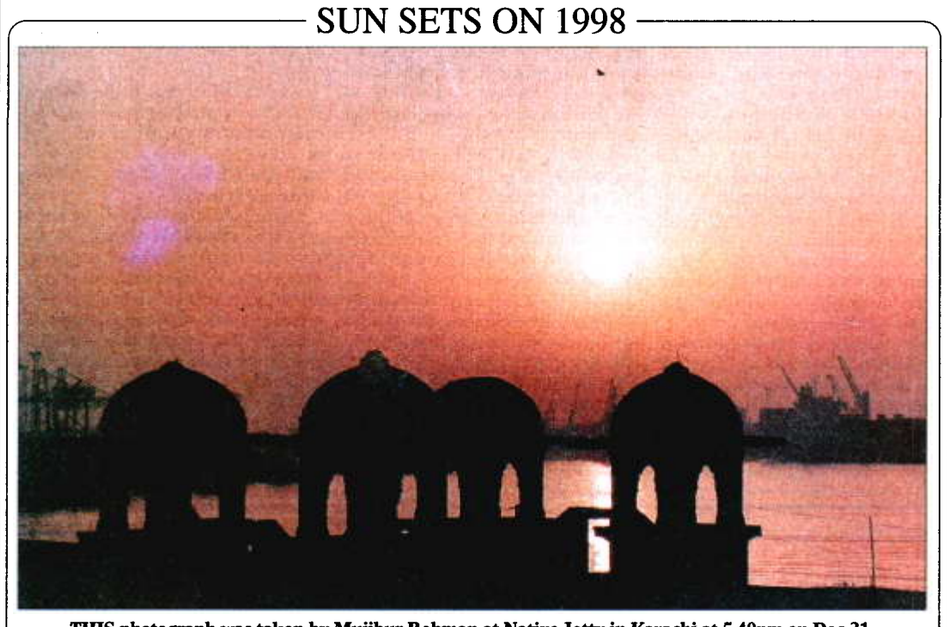
They had demanded cash of Rs10,000 from the mother of Adnan, who later complained to the Orangi Extention police station and the kidnappers were arrested by the police from a house which had served as their hideout. The police had recovered Adnan from their possession.

The mother had expressed inability to furnish the ransom. Naseem Javed and A. Sattar Khatri appearing for the police produced more than eight prosecution witnesses to support their charge.

The defence failed to produce witnesses in its favour.

The same court this month had awarded capital punishment to two persons Shahid Mehmood and Mohammad Khan accused of double- murder.— PPI

SUN SETS ON 1998



THIS photograph was taken by Mujibur Rehman at Native Jetty in Karachi at 5.40pm on Dec 31.

PM to be asked for priority action

Power crisis in Karachi severe: Gohar

Bureau Report

ISLAMABAD, Dec 31: Minister for Water and Power Gohar Ayub Khan on Thursday feared a serious power crisis in Karachi in the near future because of sharp reduction in supply to that city.

Mr Khan said he would request the prime minister to attach more importance to the power crisis than to the law and order situation in Karachi when the latter would be visiting the city in the coming days.

Responding to a volley of questions in the National Assembly during question hour, the minister also warned the members that the worst-ever water crisis in the country was approaching because of unstopped silting in the country's reservoirs.

"In 15 to 20 years time severe water crisis will develop in the country because of reduction in storage capacity of the water reservoirs," the minister said. Mr Khan added that the country immediately needed more water reservoirs to avoid the inevitable.

The minister disclosed that 30 per cent of Tarbela's storage capacity had already been reduced due to silting. "There is a 132-feet high mound of sand in Tarbela Dam, which is increasing with the passage of time," he said, adding that this was a matter of concern for all the provinces because they would not be able to get their share of water after 15 to 20 years.

The reduction in storage capacity will also, result in the shortage of electricity generation.

On the proposal of buying a nuclear power plant to overcome the shortage, he said, no country was ready to provide it to Pakistan on credit. He said France would not sell it to Pakistan but China would do it only if cash payment was made.

The minister admitted that WAPDA's grids and transformers were in very bad shape and the authority needed Rs11 billion to replace them.

Dispelling the impression that the induction of army would be another burden on WAPDA, he said, the new management intended to save Rs9 to 10 billion annually only by checking pilferage, corruption and maladministration in the authority.

Spelling out the measures adopted by the authority to control the power pilferage, he said, the steps being taken to this effect included monitoring of feeder-wise losses and combing of high-loss feeders, monitoring of industrial consumers through bulk metering panel, installation of check meter on high consumption transforms, elimination of tie-up meters and proper fixing and grouting of loose meters,

Continued on Page 11

The euro launched

BRUSSELS, Dec 31: A dream cherished by European visionaries for 40 years became reality on Thursday when finance ministers took the final steps for Friday's launching of a single currency for a powerful 11-nation European bloc. The launch will sweep away monetary borders between the 11 nations and forge a new economic superpower to rival the United States.

The European Union's executive body formally proposed the rates at which 11 national currencies will be forever locked against the euro, one of the last key decisions before the currency's launch at 2300 GMT (4am PST Friday).

The euro zone — grouping Germany, France, Austria, Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain — will account for nearly a fifth of world economic output and trade.

Details on Business Pages

LHCBA demands judge's removal

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE, Dec 31: The Lahore High Court Bar Association adopted an unprecedented resolution by an overwhelming majority on Thursday seeking, in effect, the removal of a Lahore High Court judge by the Supreme Judicial Council under Article 209 of the Constitution 'for lowering the dignity of the court'.

Thirty-nine of the hundreds of lawyers, jampacking the LHCBA's Kiyani Hall, voted against the move and the Punjab PML Lawyers Forum later held a press conference to question its validity. They alleged that the text of the resolution against Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday was not the same as given in the requisition, which was wrongly addressed to the LHCBA president rather than its secretary.

Justice Ramday is the younger brother of Attorney-General Chaudhry Muhammad Farooq, President of the Pakistan PML Lawyers Forum, and elder brother of PML MNA from Toba Tek Singh, Chaudhry Asadur Rehman.

The resolution, put forward by Pakistan Bar Council member and opposition leader Benazir Bhutto's counsel Sardar Latif Khan Khosa, was endorsed by Supreme Court Bar Association President Abid Hassan Minto, Punjab Bar Council member Hafiz Abdur Rehman Ansari, Lahore (district) Bar Association President Azar Latif Khan and Barrister Zafarullah Khan and opposed by advocates M.S. Shad (former LHCBA vice-president) and A.R. Arshad Malik.

It was adopted amid deafening applause by one of the most well-attended general body meetings of the LHCBA when put to vote by the association's president, Advocate Kazim Khan. Among those voting in favour were Pakistan Bar Council members Chaudhry Ashraf Wahla, Rana Ijaz Ahmad Khan and Hamid Khan, Punjab Bar Council members Muhammad Ramzan Chaudhry and Chaudhry Muhammad Arif, former

Continued on Page 11

US embassy in Tel Aviv closed

TEL AVIV, Dec 31: US Ambassador to Israel Edward Walker ordered the temporary closure of the American embassy in Tel Aviv on Thursday after receiving a specific threat, an embassy spokesman said.

"The embassy received a credible and specific threat and as a result the ambassador thought it prudent to close the embassy today (Thursday) while we investigate with the appropriate authorities," embassy spokesman Larry Schwartz said.

On grounds of sensitivity, Schwartz refused to say whether the threat came from an individual or an organization or whether it targeted specific embassy staff or the building itself.

He said he could not confirm a report on Israel Radio that an anonymous caller had warned of an impending bomb attack.

Witnesses said Israeli police were posted outside the embassy and that a team of Israeli sappers had conducted checks of vehicles parked in the vicinity.

"The embassy's action is consistent with actions the US government has taken in recent weeks in view of the heightened level of threat in the region," Schwartz said.

In mid-December the State Department ordered 40 US embassies in Africa to close as a precaution, citing possible reaction to US military action in Iraq and continuing threats in the region.

Washington has also ordered the departure of dependents and some diplomatic personnel in Israel and Kuwait due to the tensions in the Gulf.

An embassy source estimated the closure would only affect embassy activities on Thursday. The embassy was already due to be closed on Friday for the New Year's Day holiday.—Reuters

Defence, development expenditures cut in 97-98

SBP sees GDP growth at 4pc in new year

By Mohiuddin Aazim

KARACHI, Dec 31: The current fiscal year is expected to close with a 4 per cent growth in GDP (gross domestic product) against the target of 6 per cent.

"Barring any untoward developments during the remaining part of the (fiscal) year GDP is expected to grow at 4 per cent," according to a State Bank analysis of the prospects for 1998-99. This analysis forms part of SBP annual report for fiscal 1997-98 released here on Thursday.

Annual report '97-98 summary: Page 20

"The nuclear explosion and subsequent sanctions had large-scale effects on the economy. In particular, it adversely affected investors confidence," according to the report in an analysis of the developments during the first five months of 1997-98.

"The external sector came under great pressure," says the report adding that during July-November 1998 workers remittances declined by 39 per cent and foreign investment by about two-thirds compared with the same period last year.

"It is expected that in the second half of 1998-99 the economy will recover substantially from the adverse developments since May 1998." The report says all external payments are expected to be regularized soon, arrears of current payments cleared latest by June 1999 and foreign exchange reserves are projected to the range of $1.4-2.0 billion by the end of fiscal year 1998-99.

The report makes it clear that macroeconomic targets were not changed in the wake of nuclear explosion adding that the rate of inflation during the current fiscal year is likely to remain in single digit.

The report said inflation as measured by CPI (consumer price index) rose by 6.6 per cent during the first five months of the year (July-November 1998) compared with the annual target of 8 per cent.

"Other inflows and payments were also affected," says the report.

"On the basis of the trends so far current account balance for the

Continued on Page 11

DAWN wishes its readers A Happy New Year

IMF board meets on 15th to okay package: Dar

Bureau Report

ISLAMABAD, Dec 31: The executive board of the IMF is meeting on Jan 15 to approve the $5.5 billion bailout package for Pakistan, and disburse $600 million upfront payment before the end of next month.

"The IMF board may meet a day earlier (Jan 14) to approve the broad financial package for Pakistan", said Finance Minister Ishaq Dar.

Talking to newsmen here on Thursday, he said Pakistan expected an upfront $600 million instalment within January, out of the revived $1.6 billion ESAF and EFF.

The minister said the Paris Club was likely to meet on Jan 29 to approve about $3.5 billion debt rescheduling and added that the club would hold a two-day session during which issues related to debts would be sorted out with bilateral members.

Responding to a question he said Pakistan would pay back $230 million in January to its preferred creditors. "Now our position is much more improved and we can comfortably pay off our debts", he claimed.

"As of today [Dec 31], our foreign exchange reserves have reached to $1.057 billion", he added.

Our Heartiest Felicitations to

Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif
on declaring Open Skies Policy for Pakistan
His personal keenness in developing the Aviation Industry will go a long way in launching Pakistan into the 21st century
We also Congratulate
CAA
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and its Director General for taking necessary steps to make Prime Minister's directive possible

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